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TAGS: MASS MARR PREL NI ECOWAS

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR TRAVELS TO KEBBI STATE FOR OFR SUPPORT

11. (U) Summary: Ambassador Jeter met June 19 with Governor Mohammed Aleiro and the Emir of Gwandum, the second-ranking Northern traditional ruler, in the first trip to Kebbi State by an American Ambassador. Governor Aliero said he was pleased that Kebbi State had been chosen as a training site for OFR III. He noted that President Obasanjo addressed the issue of USG troop training during the last Council of State meeting in Abuja, asking the Governors to use their state officials and traditional rulers to explain the training and reduce the prospect of erroneous reports. The Emir pledged support for OFR. End Summary.

12. (U) Ambassador Jeter met June 19 with Governor Mohammed Aleiro and the Emir of Gwandum, Ajhaji Mustapha Jokolo, formally the second-ranking Northern traditional ruler, in the first trip to Kebbi State by an American Ambassador. Accompanied by the DATT, USAID Director, Poloff, and a Public Affairs FSN, the Ambassador described to the Emir the training that would take place in Kebbi State under OFR III. As a former army Captain who trained in the U.S. and who was Aide-de-Camp to military ruler General Buhari, the Emir was very supportive of the USG's efforts to train and equip Nigerian soldiers to enforce the peace in Sierra Leone. He pledged to communicate to his subjects both the nature and the importance of the OFR training.

13. (U) In a separate meeting, after welcoming the Ambassador's delegation, Governor Aliero also pledged his personal support for the OFR III training in his state. He noted that President Obasanjo addressed the issue of USG troop training during the last Council of State meeting in Abuja, asking the Governors to use their state officials and traditional rulers to explain the training and reduce the prospect of erroneous reports. Governor Aliero said his Administration would work to ensure a warm welcome.

14. (U) The Governor also described economic conditions in ten-year-old Kebbi State, which resemble those of other Sahelian areas. The economy, he said, consisted almost entirely of small-scale subsistence farming, which during a three-month rainy season, produced primarily millet, cassava and some rice in the wetlands along the Niger river. Aliero emphasized the importance of education to economic development and democratic consolidation. His progress on education, he said, included spending 40 percent of his annual budget on education, hiring 1400 new teachers for schools, and increasing teacher salaries by 30 percent. (Note: Adult literacy among the agricultural states in the North runs between thirty to forty percent, divided between English, Hausa and Arabic. End Note.) The Governor asked for USG help in developing the solid mineral resources in Kebbi State and the North, claiming that Nigeria's solid mineral reserves could prove to be competitive with those of South Africa's.

15. (SBU) Comment. The Kebbi State elected and traditional leadership appears fully supportive of the OFR III training, and we expect a trouble-free relationship with local officials. End comment.

Jeter